

# Local Control Accountability Plan Template Redesign: Feedback

*October 2016*

Feedback was gathered from various stakeholder groups about the most recent version of the Local Control Accountability Plan and Annual Update template (LCAP template) revisions published in the California State Board of Education (SBE) memorandum published on September 21, 2016. Forums were convened with a wide variety of stakeholders (see Table 1 below)<sup>1</sup>.

**Table 1: Stakeholder Forums Convened on LCAP Template Revisions**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Stakeholder Group(s)</b>
September 23, 2016	California County Superintendents Educational Services Association (CCSESA)
September 26, 2016	Sacramento County Office of Education (SCOE) and school districts
September 27, 2016	Association of California School Administrators (ACSA)
September 29, 2016	California Practitioner Advisory Group (CPAG)
October 7, 2016	Statewide Webinar
October 10, 2016	Members of the User Acceptance Test (UAT) Orange County Department of Education (OCDE) and school districts

The forums introduced the redesign template by section and then solicited feedback on the new elements and their impact on practitioners responsible for completing the template. Data from the forums was transcribed and summarized. The feedback is organized in the following areas:

1. Design, Format, and Layout
2. Purpose and Usefulness
3. Plan Summary
4. Budget Summary
5. Annual Update
6. Stakeholder Engagement
7. Goals, Actions, and Services
8. Functionality Enabled by Technology

## 1. DESIGN, FORMAT, AND LAYOUT

Overall, forum participants appreciated the revisions that resulted in a more visually attractive, readable, and accessible template. They also expressed a need for more detailed instructions and consistent language across the various sections of the template.

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<sup>1</sup> Sessions with SCOE, OCDE, and the statewide webinar were jointly facilitated by staff from the California Department of Education (CDE) and WestEd; CDE staff participated in the facilitation of the ACSA webinar; CDE and WestEd staff attended the CCSESA webinar.

***New Layout is More Inviting:*** Multiple participants described the new layout and colors as “cleaner and more inviting” and the colors “more pleasing.” Participants stated:

- “This reads better, cleaner, and more inviting. As one who had a meeting with a new [superintendent] from out of state, having something that has a way to capture more naturally that comes before and tells the story is useful.”
- “I was looking at the first few pages and I was looking at it from the person who has to write this. This feels a lot better, more focused on outcomes and what really happened.”

Participants also appreciated a connection between the colors used in the template and the state evaluation rubrics. However, a question was posed in terms of printing in black and white and if there is a way to create distinction in that format. Others appreciated the layout with more white space and “hyperlinks to the instructions.”

***Additional Direction Needed:*** Participants suggested that descriptors or labels be added to the colors to help clarify the intent of those sections. Some participants asked if there might be drop down menus to ensure common use of terms or automated cells to ensure budget columns added correctly. Instructions need to include distinctions between what needs to be filled out each year versus what is a three-year static item.

***Orientation of the Document:*** One participant expressed concern about the use of both landscape and portrait layout in the same document because this format choice might make it difficult to print and bind hard copies of the document.

***Layperson Language at the Beginning, Instructions at the End:*** Several participants appreciated the instructions being placed at the end of the document and that language at the beginning was phrased for easy understanding by a layperson.

## **2. PURPOSE AND USEFULNESS**

Participants clearly voiced the need to ensure that the new LCAP template supports strategic thinking, continuous improvement, and a shift away from compliance to performance.

***Opportunity for Alignment:*** Some participants reported that the new version of the document is a step in the right direction saying, “[This is an] opportunity to align this template to a more disciplined approach to continuous improvement.”

***Essence of the Document is Still Compliance:*** A few participants expressed reservations about whether the document helps move staff away from compliance:

- “While it is visually more attractive (more colorful), the essence of the document feels much more like a compliance document than a strategic plan.”
- “I am disappointed at the disconnect to the field and the lack of usefulness this template has become. There are so many boxes and questions that in my opinion, do nothing to help the teacher in the classroom or the direct providers to students increase the achievement of the students they are directly serving.”

- “Things that are unique to your district feel worked in at the end.”

**Examples of Good Process to Support Plan Development:** One group of participants and their COE shared several examples of how they model the opportunity for ongoing communication and dialogue that support plan development, focusing on the partnership aspect rather than a compliance exercise.

### 3. PLAN SUMMARY

Forum participants were nearly unanimous in calling for more clarity on how sections should be used.

**Intuitive Connections to Colors Help:** Participants appreciated the color alignment between the state evaluation rubric and the boxes in the “Greatest Progress” text boxes, with many appreciating the explicit connection of the color to the blue/green and red/orange. Some concern was expressed over the use of blue to green in distinguishing “greatest progress” as it was acknowledged that some local education agencies (LEA) may achieve “greatest progress” in shifting from orange to yellow.

**Consider the Flow of the Sections:** Participants representing school districts and COEs offered the suggestion to re-order the sections so that the summary of progress appears first, followed by greatest areas of progress, then priority areas, and finishing with the budget summary.

**Provide More Clarity on Sections of Plan Summary:** Some participants voiced the need for clarification between the “Focus Statement” and the “Key Objectives.” Many reported confusion and perceived limitations due to the template’s inclusion of only three text boxes under the “Key Objectives” section; participants asked how to include the required LCAP goals and state priorities and how to align the goals to the “Key Objectives.” While some found the three text boxes limiting and aligned to “previous ways of thinking,” others found it “repetitive.” One suggestion that was offered is to focus on priorities. Some participants also felt that elements of the “Plan Summary” might fit better in the “Annual Update” section (e.g., greatest progress and equity).

**Offer Place for Other Context:** Several participants made the suggestion to specify a place in the “Plan Summary” to offer additional or “other” context relevant to the school district (e.g., growing/declining enrollment, major construction). Participants explained that while the LCAP is important, it is not the only thing happening in the community. Additional or “other” context can be important information for the community to understand.

**Reflecting on Evaluation Rubrics in Plan Summary:** Many participants asked for clarity on the use of the color yellow and one participant thought it was “important to include any of those students in yellow and the idea to identify what will happen to boost those students.” Another asked, “What is the response if a district’s overall progress does not have any red/orange designations?” Others suggested that the colors did not necessarily help readers understand the greatest need and that they were “repetitive and unnecessary” since this information will be

covered in the “Goals, Action, and Services” section. Another participant expressed concern that the equity section would require districts to again identify underperforming groups and what services are being provided. There also seemed to be confusion about the purpose and expectations of the “Equity” text box. One participant asked if it was possible for a district to reply “Not Applicable.”

#### 4. BUDGET SUMMARY

Overwhelmingly participants reported the need for very specific and concrete guidance on completing the budget summary at the bottom of page 3 of the template.

***Define What Should Be Included, Or Not:*** Many participants asked specific questions about which funds should be included. For example, some wondered whether only unrestricted general funds should be included or if restricted general funds (i.e., federal funds) should also be included. Further, some asked whether a school district should include identified resources from other funds (i.e., Cafeteria Fund). In addition, some participants asked for more clarification for basic aid districts. Other questions included how carryover dollars would be reflected in the budget summary and the level of account code detail needed (e.g., the entire standardized account code string or terms such as certificated salaries).

#### 5. ANNUAL UPDATE

Many participants expressed the need for greater clarity in this section. Specifically, participants reported that the instructions seemed vague about whether services can be grouped or need to be described individually.

***Order of Document Sections:*** Participants appreciated having the “Annual Update” come before the “Goals, Actions, and Services” section as this made more intuitive sense.

***Collective Summary of Actions to Reach One Goal:*** One suggestion for change resulted in additional feedback from several other individuals, including, “This appears to be required for every action. Recommend this be moved, laid out differently, to allow a collective summary of all actions associated with reaching one goal.” Another participant suggested, “If we are looking at a holistic goal I wonder if it could be restated goal wide.”

***More Clarity on Amount of Detail Necessary:*** There seemed to be some confusion among the participants about the amount of space available, what information is required, and the amount of detail required. One participant stated, “There is a lot in the first box and it becomes very difficult to summarize.” Another participant asked, “How much detail do they want and what degree of difference are we talking about?”

***Timing of the Annual Update:*** Various participants suggested shifting the timing for submission of the annual update to the fall once school district financials have closed from the prior fiscal year.

***COE Representatives Concerned about Consistency:*** Participants from COEs expressed concern about the consistency of responses in this section and their ability to offer consistent support to LEAs.

## 6. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Forum participants reported the need for clear instructions and definition of terms for this section.

***Start of the 3-Year Static Plan:*** Feedback on the stakeholder engagement section focused on the three-year static plan and if revisions can be made over time. For example, one question was “Do you mean it is a 3-year period moving forward?” Some participants focused in on the term ‘effective’ and sought further understanding of that terminology in the context of the 3-year static plan. Overall, the idea to keep a baseline and demonstrate change in student outcomes was well received. Some expressed concern over the amount of time and effort to adequately communicate the changes in the LCAP template and orient participants to the evaluation rubrics.

## 7. GOALS, ACTIONS, AND SERVICES

Forum participants reported confusion about this section and many called for it to be both more comprehensive and less repetitive. Participants noted that it would be helpful to provide more clarity in the instructions for this section (e.g., include examples for “new,” “modified,” and “unchanged;” define terminology – i.e., baseline).

***Student Groups Included in Actions:*** Many participants expressed concern about the information in the “Students to be Served” and “Contributes to Improved Services for” sections. One participant asked, “Where are foster, low-[socioeconomic status], [English learners], expelled [students]? Why wouldn’t the same options apply to both and be more expansive than either currently is? They should both be comprehensive and they should be the same.” Another participant expressed concern over how to note services for other student groups such as Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) students.

***Budget Elements Are Unclear:*** Participants expressed confusion about the required expenditure reporting and accounting components of the LCAP template and noted that the regulations used by COEs are inconsistent. Participants questioned whether the LEA must reference all fund sources for each proposed expenditure. However, participants noted that it doesn’t state what must be minimally accounted for, and that this is unclear in the directions. Several questions were raised about the source and budget section. One participant suggested providing “examples of what is desired” so that districts can “get it right” the first time.

***Numbering Converted to Text:*** Other participants were concerned about the numbering system, stating, “Then we have to remember to type 2.1,2.2, etc., in the next goal? I think it is an

unnecessary detail.” Other participants suggested that the language for each priority be provided instead of numbering the state priorities.

***Necessity of Metrics in Multiple Places:*** One participant made a specific suggestion about the layout. “Layout appears to require each action be aligned to a separate metric, (or that metrics would be repeated for each action under one goal?). As metrics are listed under the goal, are they necessary in two places? If omitted, Action column could align more directly to budget [information] columns below it. Neater look and saves space.”

***Does this Lead to Less Repetition?*** Various participants posed questions and made comments about whether the revisions will lead to more (or less) repetition in the template. Overwhelmingly, participants expressed the desire for less repetition (less cutting and pasting). Specifically, participants were unclear that there would be an opportunity to check a box, avoiding the need to cut and paste text. Also, some participants raised the question of how to account for staff that are multi-funded and are identified to serve multiple actions in the LCAP.

## **8. FUNCTIONALITY ENABLED BY TECHNOLOGY**

There were various suggestions across the forums that are most easily addressed by the migration of the current, Word-based template to an online form. Several of these suggestions are included below. It is important to note that the timeline for an online, revised template will be considered only after adoption of this next set of revisions.

***Drop Down Menus:*** Various elements of the template can be converted to drop down menus, making it easier for users to complete the template. These drop down menus may also help to ensure consistent language where it is needed or necessary for school districts.

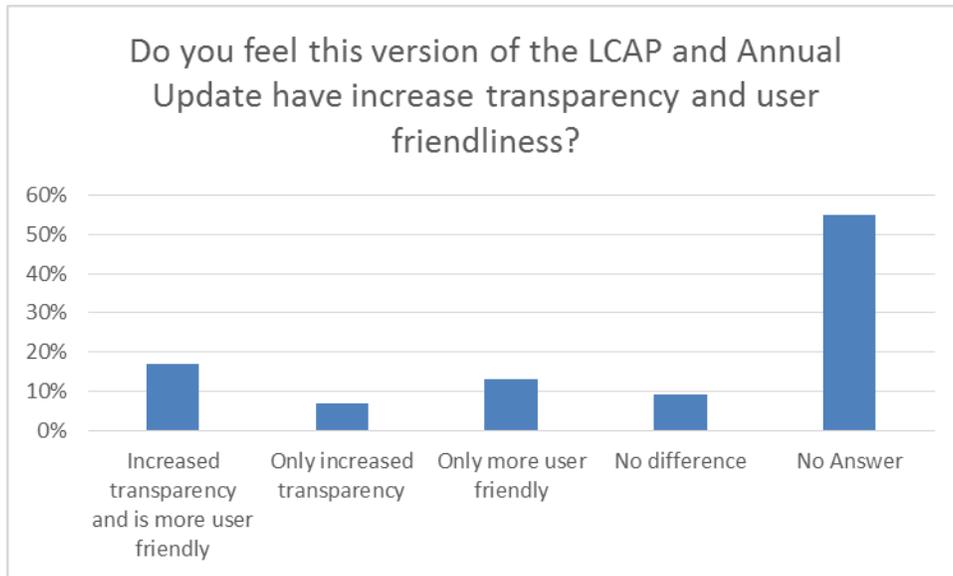
***Reduce Redundancy Through Imports:*** Participants offered, “Maybe an index (for consumers to find by budget number or by title). When you think about [executive] summary and what a district needs ([information] graphics) we need a connection to evaluation rubrics rather than going out to find other types of displays. So anything from the rubrics that can be imported.”

***Automated Tabulation:*** Several participants inquired about the template’s ability to sum across various resources and actions, avoiding inefficiency on the part of users. One comment captured the theme: “Is there a way to automate it so that there is an auto tabulation so there is a cross check so you don’t need to add up all the columns?”

Two polls – one related to transparency and user friendliness and one related to simplified language and structure – were conducted as part of the statewide webinar that was held on October 7, 2016. The responses and further description are provided below.

## October 7 Webinar Poll Response

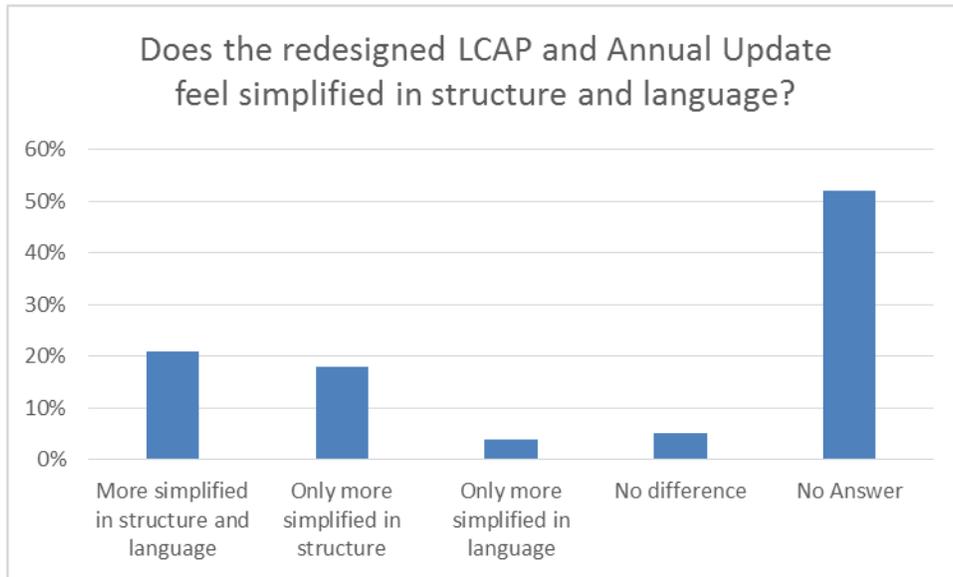
### 1. Transparency and User Friendliness



More than 50 percent of the webinar participants did not answer the poll question. However, of the poll respondents that selected an answer, slightly more respondents felt that this version of the LCAP template has both increased transparency and user friendliness than those that felt this version is only more user friendly.

Comments from this poll indicated that the budget and use of funds section of the template needs more clarity. Additionally, it was shared that user friendliness will not be apparent until districts are clear on what the county office will require in each box. It was noted that changes in terminology might be challenging for practitioners required to complete the LCAP template.

## 2. Simplified Language and Structure



More than 50 percent of the webinar participants did not answer the poll question. Of the poll respondents that selected an answer, slightly more respondents felt that this version of the LCAP template is more simplified in language and structure than those that felt this version is only more simplified in structure.

Comments from this poll included that the color coding simplifies and language clarifies information with easily understandable descriptions/directions. Finding a way to further clarify the language will always be a challenge. Participants noted that making the transition in thinking from the current template to this version is where it doesn't feel simplified. While the decrease in redundancy is appreciated, the participants noted that additional fields will likely require more time.